

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, May 28th 2017**

“And behold I am with you always, until the end of the age.” - Matthew 28

In my mind’s eye, I imagine myself stumbling across a small group of men and their leader on a mountain in Galilee 2,000 years ago.

The men were tough and no-nonsense working fellows who obviously didn’t spend their days reading scrolls in the Temple. They were publicly worshipping God and their leader but I overheard them arguing until their leader spoke.

“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,” he said. “And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age.”

With that, he disappeared, seemingly up to heaven. But what did he mean? I was confused but even more fascinated. Most of the men looked dumbfounded, staring into the sky. A few started weeping. Some just stood there until they slowly started walking down the mountain.

I followed them at a respectful distance, trying to make sense out of what I had just witnessed, hoping to learn more about their leader. Somehow I knew my life had changed. The leader was gone but I still felt his presence.

As I contemplate this scene, I ponder what the Ascension means to us today. It seems to simultaneously celebrate loss and hope – the loss of Jesus on earth but the hope that he remains with us forever. Ironically, had the apostles not lost Jesus in the flesh, they likely would not have spread his spirit to the ends of the earth for generations to come.

The Ascension’s intertwining message of loss and hope has always struck me as especially powerful because it coincides with the graduation season when so many people experience a bittersweet combination of moving on from the beloved familiar to a new life.

And just like the disciples, we’re scared of facing the unknown. However Jesus’ promise that “I am with you always, until the end of the age” resonates with us and reassures us. Like the apostles leaving that mountain, we can trust that Jesus will remain with us no matter where life takes us.

Blessings to all graduates and their families and to all who are experiencing transitions! May the Lord be with you and give you hope, strength and courage.

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